

# **ADAM VAN GRACK**

## **ROCKVILLE CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE**

### **Washington Area Bicyclist Association (“WABA”) Questions**

***Q1. Bicycling and bike infrastructure enhances quality of life and addresses issues such as affordability, equity, access, health, and the safety of our streets. What can the City of Rockville and you as an elected official do to actively encourage more people to ride their bikes?***

My son rides his bike to school every day (to Robert Frost Middle School), and I am often found cycling throughout the city for transportation and exercise. First, I am someone who leads by example, so I will be riding my bike with my son regularly (as I do currently). The more people see their elected officials cycling or walking to events, the more they will see it as something they should do as well. Second, we need to vastly improve our cycling infrastructure in the city. By improving bike lanes, bike trails, and protection of cyclists (and pedestrians), we will encourage safe bike riding. There are many places (such as between Montgomery College and Town Center) that I personally do not feel safe cycling. We must fix this problem. Third, we need to let children know how safe and efficient bike riding is. Rockville has an amazing Recreation and Parks Department, and we should utilize this Department to help encourage youth cycling. We can have youth cycling programs, camps, and groups to get our city’s children in the mindset of becoming life-long cyclists.

***Q2. People bike and walk when it’s safe, comfortable, and connected to the places they need to go. Rockville’s bike infrastructure is still disjointed. In your opinion, where are the most urgent gaps in our bike network and what steps do we need to take to close these gaps?***

We need to vastly improve Rockville’s bike lanes and cycling supported infrastructure in the city. I often bike on Route 355, and the space for cycling is minimal (and hazardous). By improving bike lanes, we will encourage safe bike riding. The bike lane program implemented in North Bethesda has been excellent and should be an example for Rockville to follow. Additionally, we need a greater network of bike trails, aside from just bike lanes on roads. My son bikes to school solely on bike trails, as cycling to school on the street is too dangerous for him (especially when it is dark early in the morning). The City of Rockville needs to budget more finances to make these changes, and, additionally, I plan to work at the county, state, and federal levels to leverage more funding for support to close these gaps.

***Q3. Cities across the country are installing protected bike lanes, bike lanes with physical separation between bike and automobile traffic, to encourage more people to ride and increase comfort for cyclists of all ages and abilities. Studies have shown that protected bike lanes increase roadway safety for everyone – people bicycling, walking, and driving. Do you support the installation of protected bike lanes on Rockville’s streets? Do you support installing protected bicycle facilities if it requires replacing a motor vehicle travel lane and delays motorized vehicles by a few seconds? Please explain why.***

We need to vastly improve our bike lanes and cycling supported infrastructure in the city. When I cycle from Montgomery College to Rockville Town Center on Route 355, it is harrowing and dangerous. We need to work to find a better solution for cyclists. I do support dedicated bike lanes and physical separation markers (like what was done in North Bethesda) in many cases, and additionally we could (and should) also have better bike lanes/trails *next to* sidewalks. I plan to work with community stakeholders to find a solution that works and is safe for everyone.

***Q4. Voters care about street safety, bicycling, transit, and walking issues. Why should these voters vote for you?***

I grew up in Rockville. I learned to ride a bike on the Wootton High School track over 40 years ago, biked to school in Rockville (when bicycle safety was vastly worse than today), and have been cycling in Rockville for over 40 years. I also often walked to school growing up here, used to walk to the Rockshire Giant for groceries, and walk/run along Rockville's Millennium Trail almost every day. As the only candidate who grew up in Rockville, I want to see my city thrive by making our streets safe for cycling, running, and walking. Additionally, I am a cyclist, runner, hiker, and an environmentalist. I love to bike with my family. I also walk/run regularly throughout the city for exercise and transportation. Accordingly, I want my family (and my community) to be able to walk, run, and cycle in a safe environment. I am also passionate about biking and pedestrian safety because the more we encourage cycling and walking, the more we protect the environment. My dedication towards environmental issues and non-profits (volunteering and serving as a board member) has been consistent for over 30 years, and I do not intend to stop that focus when elected to the City Council.

***Q5. The City of Rockville adopted a Vision Zero Plan in 2020, with the principle that transportation should focus on safety of all road users (cyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and motorists) as a foundation, and that the only acceptable number of deaths and serious injuries on the road is zero. How do you propose to advance Vision Zero in the city of Rockville?***

When I attended the Vision Zero Plan forum last month, I mentioned a few areas that the city could focus upon, but most important, for the Vision Zero Plan to succeed, we need to have a serious change in attitude from the Council and the public about supporting pedestrians and cyclists over motorists. The Mayor & Council has adopted Vision Zero but there have been few concrete recent changes in pedestrian and bicycle safety. There have been hardly any new bike lanes in the past few years, and some of the most dangerous intersections (many along Wootton Parkway and Route 355) have not seen improvement in the past 4 years. To apply (not just adopt) a Vision Zero Plan, there must be action. My son bikes to school every day, and none of the intersections on Wootton Parkway have improved at all in the past 4 years. Thus, when elected to the City Council, I plan to make direct and specific changes to the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure of the city. Rockville's budget must account for specific improvements. The city can also request funding for some of these changes from the County and State Governments, and I plan to work at county, state, and federal levels to leverage more funding for support to close these gaps. Additionally, *while also adopting specific infrastructure changes*, I plan to hold more public meetings to explain why we need to ensure safe walking and biking in our city.

***Q6. What neighborhood do you live in? Why? Where are your favorite places to spend time in our town?***

I live in Rockshire. Additionally, I grew up in Horizon Hill, work in Rockville Town Center, and have family in King Farm. My favorite places to cycle are around the Western Area of the City (Rockshire, Fallsmead, Seven Locks, Falls Grove, Glen Mill Road), and my favorite place to hike/explore with my son is along the Watts Branch stream and parkland (we also do stream clean-ups there). For a while last year, I was the "Stravia Local Legend" for cycling on the big hill on Glen Mill Road between Lakewood Country Club and Wootton Parkway.

***Q7. Approximately 5% of the FY 23 Capital Improvement Program transportation program area budget is allocated for pedestrian and bicycle projects. Do you think that the capital budget allocation for bike infrastructure is too much, just right, or too little? Please explain your answer.***

I believe we should increase the 5% of the FY 23 Capital Improvement Program for pedestrian and bicycle projects. As someone who has biked in Rockville and walked throughout Rockville for over 40 years, I understand how important it is to ensure that our city allows its residents to bike, walk, and run safely. However, more important than the amount is how it is being allocated. We need to make sure that the allocation of pedestrian and bicycle projects includes all neighborhoods (not just the central neighborhoods). That said, the city also needs to spend their money on actual projects, and not just studies to determine how they will allocate their funds. Too much of the budget includes money for studies and task forces without specific allocations to fixing problems. My reasons are the same as for Q4: safety, security, and the environment.

***Q8. Please explain your opinion of the proposed Bus Rapid Transit projects along MD 355 and MD 586, and how bicycling and walking fit into this picture.***

While I do support the BRT projects, they should not impair improvements to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. It is critical for Rockville and Montgomery County to invest in all types of transportation, including public transit. Simply stated, the choice between BRT projects and pedestrian and cyclist safety is a false choice. Each of these environmentally supported transportation systems are not mutually exclusive, and we cannot sacrifice walking and biking access for any public transportation.

***Q9. Do you have a biking related story you'd like to tell?***

Last year, when I was on a 25-mile bike ride, my bike slid on some gravel and I badly skinned my elbow, arm, and leg at 'mile 10' near Glen Mill Road in Rockville. Despite this, I continued the bike ride and finished the full 25 miles. While I needed a lot of bandages, I was very proud that I finished the ride. Additionally, for most of last year, I was the "Strava Local Legend" of the large hill on Glen Mill Road (next to Lakewood Country Club). That Local Legend status is my most proud biking achievement!